

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Operas of South India —By Dr. S.A.K. Durga	3
Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastrigal	7
Palmy Days of Pallavi —By Nestor	9
Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar —By N.R. Bhuvarahan	13
Criticism in Karnatak Music —By K.S. Mahadevan	19
News & Notes	25
Tradition and Talent in Karnatik music —By Prof. R.K. Ramanathan	27
The elements of Indian music —By Dennis Gray Stoll	35
The Art of Seeing Painting —By J.H. Cousins	39
My Guru Ram Gopal —By Sowmiya Madhan Gopal	43
Some aspects of Music Education —By Sandhyavandanam Srinivasa Rao	45
க்ருதி (முத்துஸ்வாமி தீக்ஷிதர்) ("காசி விச்வேச்வர" —காம்போதி)	46

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## Operas of South India

By

Dr. S. A. K. DURGA

*Dept. of Music, Madras University*

The evolution of theatre cannot be traced to a definite period as theatre includes many fine arts in it. It is inter-related with human emotions which give rise to gestures. May be it was just an outlet for human impulses and the cradle of all fine arts. It can be said that Indian theatre took its definite form and shape before the time of Bharata and hence Bharatamuni has recorded the facts in his invaluable work "Natyasastra", the first treatise on Indian dramaturgy. In India music and dance were associated with drama from the earliest beginnings. "Natakam" is the word for drama in India and the term "Natakam" is the derivative of the root "Nrut" to dance. Drama in India was inextricably connected with dance and the word "Natyā" in Sanskrit comprehends both dance and drama whereas the word "Koothu" in Tamil represents dance and music. Hence drama or "Natyā" in India was an audio-visual representation and was of operatic type.

### OPERA

Opera is a special kind of theatre with music. The form "opera" is very popular in Western countries and they use the term "opera" to denote any drama which is set to music. But opera in South India is entirely different from the western opera. It is a musical form wherein a story is set to songs with intermittent verses and prose passages in both conversational and indirect style. The word opera is properly the plural of the Latin word "Opus" meaning work.

Opera is a shortened form of the Italian "Opera in musica" that is, a musical work. In the West, the composers used the word "Melodrama" for opera and the term "Opera" meaning "drama per musica" or musical play was first used in England from 1638, in France and Germany at the end of the 18th century and this term has been accepted relatively recently in Italy.<sup>1</sup>

Prof. P. Sambamoorthy first introduced the word 'opera' to denote the musical plays of South India and the vernacular terms such as "Sangeeta natakam". "Geyanatakam and "Isainatakam" were used for the South Indian musical plays. But none of the composers of South India used these terms for their musical plays and they have given the name of their works as "Natakam", "Charitram" and "Keertanai".

### EVOLUTION

Why they did not use terms such as Sangeetanatakam, Geyanatakam and Isainatakam needs examination. It may be due to the fact that at that time, there was no necessity to classify a play into Natakam and Geyanatakam or Nruthyanatakam because the dramas which were in vogue before the 20th century were operatic in character and music was indispensable in their plays.

The evolution of operas can be traced back to the *uparupakas* wherein music and

<sup>1</sup> Ethel Peyser and Marian Baner, *How Opera grew*, 27-28p.

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dance predominate and they do not have mostly any prose passage. These *uparupakas* paved the way for Sangeetakas and Keertaniyanatakas which in turn gave rise to vernacular provincial theaters with full music and dance. These traditional provincial theaters are either of religious type connected with the rituals in temple or folk types concerned with the masses. Karnatic music is used in the provincial theatres of South India but with folk or religious character.

### CLASSICAL OPERA COMPOSITIONS

These provincial vernacular theatres of South India paved the way for the later classical opera compositions in South India. Saint Tyagaraja, Gopalakrishna Bharati and others have used Karnatic music in its classical style in their works and made them rank as Sangeetanatakam or opera. The distinguishing factors of South Indian operas from the provincial vernacular theaters of South India are the treatment of the music, the use of mere "Abhinaya" or mime and the absence of *vidushaka* or clown in the plays. As the music is of classical type in opera compositions, the songs from these operas are sung in vocal concerts and performed in instrumental concerts even today in South India. The theme is based upon Puranic stories with little modification on the original text. The *Bhakti rasa* permeates the South Indian operas. They make use of both musical forms such as Darus and Keertanas and literary forms such as Seesapadyam, Dvipada, Asiriyappa, Sloka etc. The introduction of literary forms is a unique feature of South Indian operas.

### WESTERN OPERA DIFFERENT

A study of western operas reveals that they are entirely different from the operas of South India. In the west, the

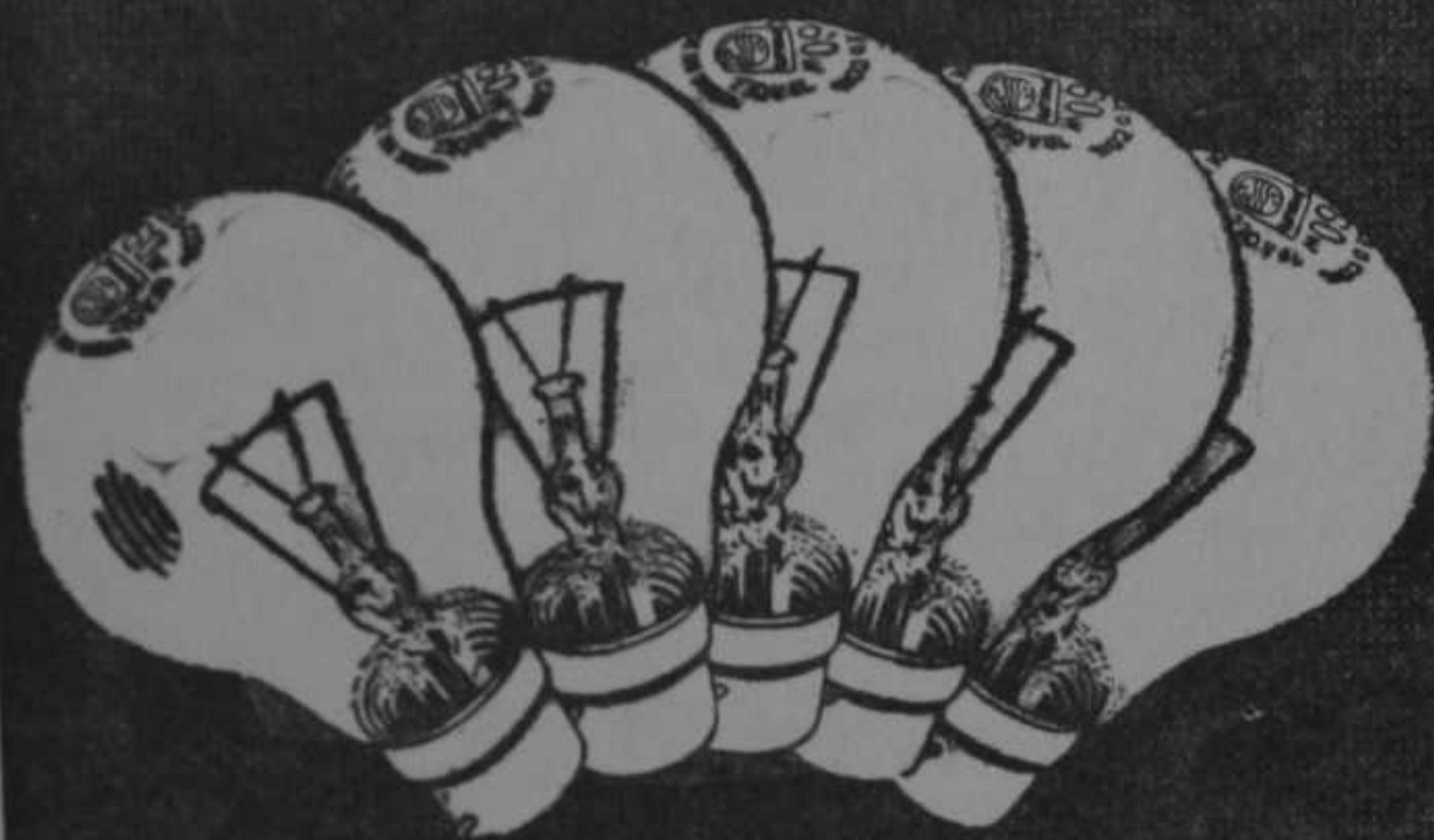
opera is a drama set to music wherein importance is given equally to the dramatic and musical aspects. But in South India, importance is given more to the music and it is not a mere drama set to music. It is a story which is set to music with intermittent verses and prose passages in conversational and indirect style. It can be produced on the stage or it can be read as a piece of literature or can even be sung by a single person or group of persons as a musical composition.

The difference between a drama and an opera is one of emphasis. The action is simpler in an opera than in an ordinary play. The plot and characterisation are set in broad outline rather than in detail in an opera. In other words, the plot is only the means to an end in a musical play while prominence is given to the musical setting and the way in which it is performed by the vocalists and instrumentalists.

### STRESS ON MUSIC

An opera depends upon music for expression and hence it cannot be realistic. The beauty and expressiveness of the music really holds the audience. The music intensifies the dramatic force but eases the dramatic tension. The purpose of the connecting verses and prose passages is to convey to the audience a "programme" so that they can better appreciate the expressiveness of the strictly musical portions. The entire dramatic tempo is slower than the tempo of the drama in an opera. This is because the entire play is sung throughout in an opera. It also takes a longer time for the development of the plot than the time required for an ordinary play. In short, it is mainly for the music that the lover of opera goes to the theatre. Unlike a drama, which can be enjoyed only by those who know

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the language of the play, opera can be appreciated to a certain extent even by those who do not follow the text but only, through the beauty of the music.

The production of opera has its own advantages: Firstly, Karnatic music will become more popular as theatre is a mass-

media and the field of orchestra with melodic type can be explored and improved. Opera is a separate manifestation of the arts of music and drama, each claiming sovereign status. It belongs to the branch of applied music. Though it is an international art form, it differs in its form and style from country to country.



BUDALUR KRISHNAMURTHI SASTRIGAL

(1896 - 1978)

Of the very few who made a mark as an exponent of Gottuvadyam, the late Budalur Krishnamurthi Sastrigal held a pre-eminent place as a concert musician. He was born in 1896 at Andanallur in Tanjore district. Steeped in the Vedas and puranic lore learnt from his father Sethurama Sastri, music fascinated him in his teens and he received his early lessons from Koneri-rajapuram Vaidyanatha Aiyar. Later, he became a disciple of Gayakasi-khamani Muthiah Bhagawathar. Once when he happened to see Muthiah Bhagawathar play on the Tambura as a Gottuvadyam, he also practised and found immense solace in it. He stopped vocal music and practised on the Gottuvadyam and soon found he could play with ease and skill on it.

With a firm resolve to become a Gottuvadyam Vidwan, he approached the greatest Gottuvadyam player of the time, the late Sri Sakharama Rao and took instructions from him on many technical points. These lessons opened his eyes to the wider possibilities of that instrument. Very soon he achieved proficiency on the instrument and became a leading player. His reverence and dedication to the muse was so great that he would not allow any consideration to compromise with his ideals in music. Even after he became an expert on the instrument, he would not rest content, but would go on experimenting with it every day to seek new avenues of expression. He characterised these experiments as "attempts", a word coined by him to indicate that he was attempting the impossible. But they were great innovations and his instrument could utter any word or spoken syllable. Such was his mastery over it.

Shy, silent and retiring by nature, Sastrigal was capable of much wit and humour. One instance recalled by the late Prof. R. Srinivasan: "One day when I was admiring the late Naina Pillai's Tambura which was then in Musiri Subramanya Aiyar's House, Sastrigal was also there seeing the instrument. Instead of the usual four beads at the end of the wires (employed for sruti adjustment) that Thambura had four little silver horses of exquisite workmanship. Sastrigal asked me what I was admiring and when told it was the silver horses, snapped at once: 'Sir, It is a four horse-power Thambura'. Musiri and myself were in rollicking laughter". He was a great concert musician and enjoyed wide patronage from the public. His demonstrations at the Music Academy were highly educative and enlightening since he rendered the songs clearly as he played on the instrument with melody and lingering sweetness.

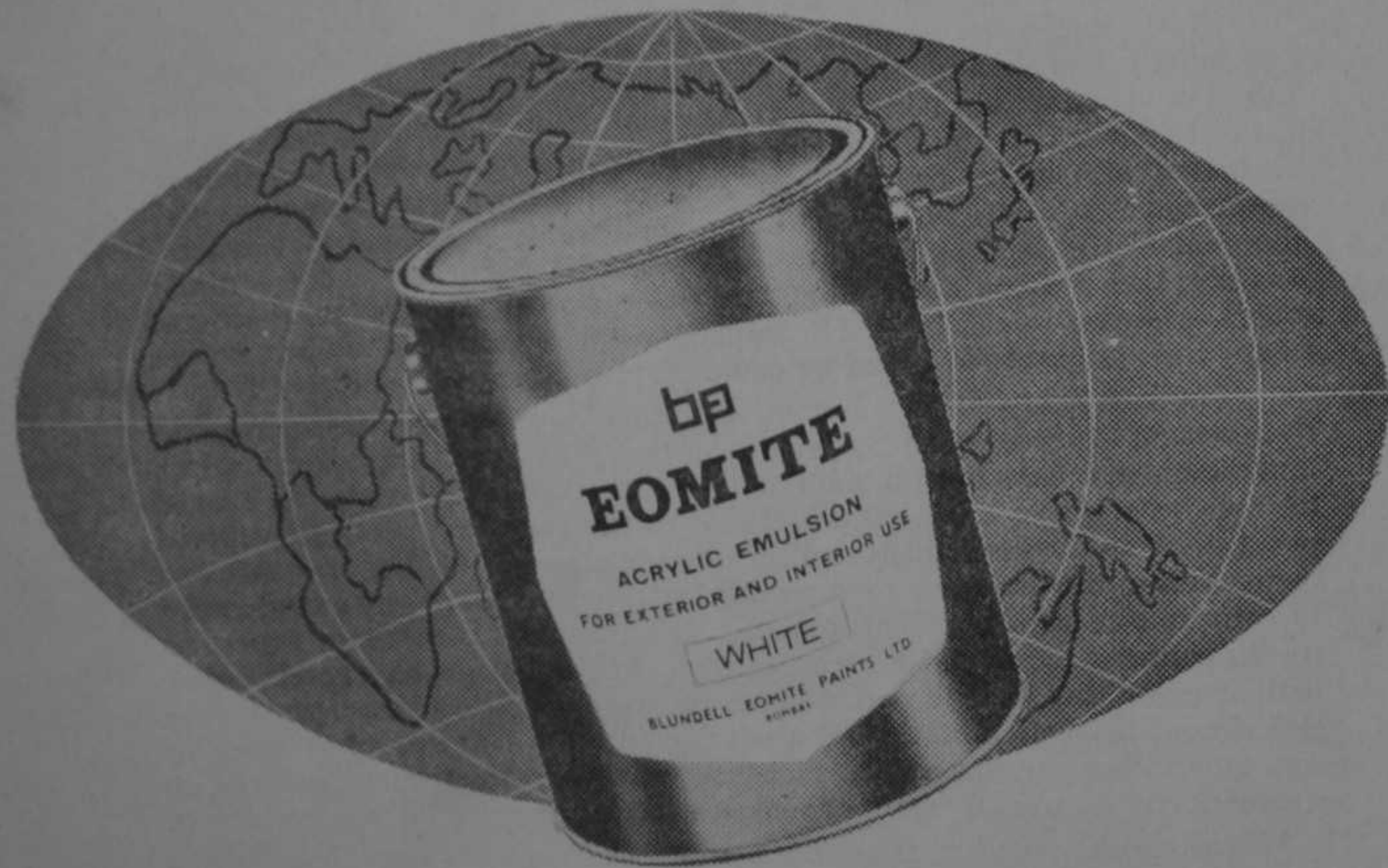
For several years he served as the Principal of the Music Department at KALAKSHETRA. He was the recipient of many titles like "Sangita Kalanidhi" from the Madras Music Academy and "Sangita Kala Sikhamani" from the Indian Fine Arts Society. He was also the recipient of the Sangeet Natak Academy Award for instrumental music.

His recent demise at the ripe age of 82 draws the curtain on a fine era in instrumental Karnatik music.

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## Palmy Days of Pallavi

By

NESTOR

Louis Untermeyer said of one art form that it was an "effort to express the inexpressible in terms of the unforgettable". This might well be an apt description of that art form called "Pallavi" in classical Karnatik Music, with its intricacies so delicate and subtle, so exact and compact, so full of knots and links and colours so fresh and vivid. Although the 13th century classic, the "Sangita Ratnakara" makes a reference to this branch of our music, it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that the Pallavi attained a definite form and content. It is fascinating to ponder over the development of this unique and exacting branch of Karnatik music which, with the passing of the giants and of time, seems to be on the way out, rather regrettably, with some rare exceptions.

### THE GREAT GIANTS

The fact that the Pallavi attained perfection while the Kritis were given less prominence in concerts of 70 or 80 years ago is intriguing and can only be explained by what Walter Pater said in another context: 'Every moment some form grows perfect.....Some mood or passion or insight or intellectual excitement which becomes irresistibly real and attractive.....waking us to the hope and exaltation of the untried, unsuspected possibilities of thought in art'. It is in some such mood perhaps that our forebears evolved and perfected the art of Pallavi for which an indispensable requisite was the perfect balance of form and content, raga and tala, manner and mood, which could be comprehensively

termed as Style. To the great colossi like Syama Sastri, Konerirajapuram Vaithi, Pushpavanam, Pallavi Sesha Iyer, Pallavi Gopala Iyer, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar, Karaikudi Brothers, Conjeevaram Naina Pillai, *music in one sense the most swiftly passing and intangible of things, was in another the essence of the imperishable* as, Goethe said. For all those giants, Pallavi was a warm moving mass of music, the gusto of which conveyed a sense of elemental power to the ear and stemmed from a technical mastery of an exacting kind.

### SCOPE FOR MANODHARMA

The tradition of Pallavi in Karnatic music illustrates the importance given to imagination, 'manodharma', in the whole scheme. That was sought to be done by putting equal emphasis on Raga alapana in all its architectural and emotional splendour—"Jewelled arches of rainbows supported by colonnades of moonlight"—and on the strictly scientific aspect viz. rhythm—imagination and discipline, which can well be the watchwords of life.

There can be no two opinions on the excellence attained in raga alapana by masters like Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Pushpavanam Iyer, who with their mellifluous voice based on a high Sruti could soar over sthayis like Shelley's bird and treat their audiences to brilliant expositions of ragas for hours together in the soft stillness of the night. Each one of them had their specialities among the ragas-Thodi (Coimbatore

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puram), Kedaragowla, Nayaki, Begada  
(Narasimha Iyengar) etc.

### PALLAVI OF 8-KALAIS

It was not just a coincidence that the same imaginative artists had their *forte* in the Pallavi also. Art and Science were truly fused together in their case. The Pallavis were cast in 2, 4 and 8 *Kalais*—Veena Subbarama Iyer used to indulge in the last—and the *neraval*, *swaraprastharas* in such a *vilambakala* came naturally to them and there was not a single false step. Kanjeevaram Nayana Pillai went a stage further on occasions and instead of the known *talas*, he used to select one of the 235 *alankara talas* and construct his own pallavis on them. *Anuloma* and *villoma* were invariably performed in the pallavis

by all these masters, According to the late Mudicondan Venkatarama Iyer who himself belonged to this doughty clan and has often demonstrated Simhananda Pallavi of 128 aksharas, the old masters used to leaven the wieght and toughness of pallavi singing by laying adequate stress on *neraval* and *swaras* and giving their imagination free rein in these two departments. If present day musicians can revive this great art form, it will be a shot in the arm for Karnatik music. The time factor of concerts is a problem no doubt, but then it would be worthwhile trying to sing fewer *Kritis* and eschew mechanical *swaraprastharas*. The time so saved can well be devoted to full scale Pallavi singing, preferably preceded by a short announcement of its *tala* structure, *eduppu* etc to suit modern conditions. There is no warrant for the presentiment that the public will not be amused.

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# Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar

(1836-1924)

By

N. R. BHUVARAHAN

Karnatic music reaches its high watermark in the rendering of a Pallavi, signifying the acme of *manodharma sangita*. Some of the brilliant exponents of this complex musical form, have earned the prefix 'Pallavi' before their names. Thus, we had a galaxy of master singers from Pachaimiriam Audiyappa Aiyah, who systematised Pallavi (author of "Viriboni" Varna) down to Kancheepuram Nayana Pillai and Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer. In between, we had giants like Pallavi Gopala Aiyar, Ghanam Krishna Aiyar, Pallavi Sessa Iyer, Pallavi Ramier, Nemanam Subramania Aiyar, Sivaramiah, Shatkala Govinda Marar, Kunnakkudi Krishna Aiyar, Andanallur Subbier, Somu Bhagavathar and Tiruvaiyar Subramania Aiyar. Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar also belonged to this illustrious galaxy.

## SILVERY VOICE

Narasimha Iyengar was a brilliant singer, endowed with a silvery ringing *sareera*, who retained the purity and responsive character of his voice till his last days. His alpanaswaras and neravals were thought-provoking, based on *sarva lagu* method. At a performance given by him in Salem, when top musicians and Vidwans like Patnam Subramanya Aiyar, Pallavi Sessa Iyer and Andhanallur Subbaier were present, he was hailed as "Pallavi Narasimha Iyengar" in recog-

nition of his marvellous powers in the exposition of Pallavi.

## EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING

Narasimha Iyengar was born in 1836 A.D. in a small village known as Tiru-Kaichiram, now familiarly known as Kachanam, near Tiruvarur, in Tanjore District. He belonged to an orthodox Vaishnavite Vadagalai Iyengar community and his parents were Sri Ramaswami Iyengar and Srimathi Komalavalli Ammal. He was one of seven brothers and early evinced a desire to learn music. To fulfil his desire, he wandered from place to place in his teens (he was 10) in search of a guru. In his early years he had learned music from one, Appakkutti Nattuvanar. Later, he underwent *gurukulavasa* under Maharnombuchavadi Venkatasubbaier a scion and disciple of Saint Thygaraja. He was fortunate enough to have seen Thygaraja in person. Thanks to the grace of Sadguru, he lived for 88 years and spanned four generations, providing a link between Thygaraja and us.

Narasimha Iyengar gave his last memorable concert in 1923, when he was 87 at the Sri Rama Navami Festival organised by his disciple T.K. Sessa Iyengar in George Town, before an august assembly of Vidwans and rasikas, when he enthralled an audience of thousand people in the open pandal. It is on record how

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the celebrated Hindustani musician, Abdul Karim Khan, expressed his great admiration of the performance. Narasimha Iyengar passed away the next year, on the day he completed 88.

When he was very young, the story goes, he stood at the gates of the Tanjore Palace when he caught the attention of the Raja himself who took pity on him and took him to his place and arranged for his boarding and lodging. Deeply moved by the boy's thirst for music he entrusted him to the care of palace Vidwans. From that day, his earnest practice in music began in a systematic way which persisted till his last years.

## CONTEMPORARIES

Later, when he was 30 years, he migrated to Namakkal, where he married Smt. Namagiri Ammal. It was here that he had his first disciple, Namakkal Ranga Sastrigal. Launching on his profession as a concert musician, he soon acquired a name and fame and was regarded on a level with Maha Vaidyanatha Aiyar and Patnam Subramania Aiyar. Some of his contemporaries were the musical giants, Bikshandarkoil Subbarayar, Ghanam Krishna Aiyar, Peria Vaidyanatha Aiyar, Chinna Vaidyanatha Aiyar, Coimbatore Raghava Aiyar and Kunnakkudi Krishna Aiyar. He spent a good part of his life by giving musical performances before appreciative, encouraging and patronising Rajas and Zamindars in Tanjore, Ramnad, Mysore Seithur, Kattuputhur Udayarpalayam, Pudukottah, Devakottai and Sivaganga.

## RAGAM, THANAM and PALLAVI

Rendering ragam, thanam and Pallavi occupied the foremost place in all these performances. The singing of kritis was not much in vogue in those days. It was

only late in life, adapting himself to the changing fashion, that he began to incorporate a few more kritis in his recitals. As he spent a good part of his time in Namakkal, he came to be known as Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar. Migrating from place to place to satisfy his craving for music, he never had much contact or ties with other members of his family or relatives. While touring Madurai, he happened to visit Srivilliputhur, where he stayed for two years. Madavarvilagam Vallabha Aiyar was his disciple here. In 1917, he visited Poona, where another of his leading disciples, Calcutta Raghavachariar (now happily alive in Bombay) spent many pleasant days with him. Ghanam Krishna Iyer who chanced to listen to his music deeply appreciated his style and mode of singing thanam and tried to incorporate the same in his renderings too.

## ACCOMPANISTS

Narasimha Iyengar visited many places in South India like Tanjore, Mysore, and Ramnad, where there was patronage for gifted musicians. Several times he exhibited his talents competing with his contemporaries. In such meetings jointly with Kunnakudi Krishna Aiyar and Maha Vaidyanatha Aiyar Narasimha Iyengar was easily and unanimously adjudged as the best (according to his prathama sishya Calcutta Raghavachariar). In most of his performances, he had for his accompaniment Chinna Devudu Aiyar, Pudukkottai Narayanaswami Aiyar and Tirukodikaval Krishna Aiyar on the Violin and Narayanaswami Appa, Das Swami, Tukkaramappa, Alaganambi, Tanjore Pakkiri, Pudukkottai Dakshinamurthi Pillai on the mridangam and Nannumiya on the dolak. There was such an intimacy between Narasimha Iyengar and Krishna



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Aiyar born of mutual admiration, that at the demise of the latter, Narasimha Iyengar deeply mourned his loss and fasted for a whole day. He was a leading concert musician and was in great demand till he was 68, till 1904. In the next generation Palghat Anantharama Bagavathar, Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Iyengar, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Aiyar and Pushpavanam Aiyar were the leading performers. Narasimha Iyengar's concerts were in demand even during that time, though not as frequently as before.

## BAND OF DISCIPLES

After his 65th year, he lived at Srirangam for nearly 24 years. During these years, many disciples gathered round him and learnt music in the *gurukulavasa* tradition. Prominent among them were Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Nerur Rangachariar and Srinivasachariar, Madurai brothers (Srinivasa Iyengar and Srirangam Iyengar), Sattur Krishna Iyengar, "Calcutta" Raghavachariar, Umayalpuram Kalyanarama Aiyar, Salem Narasimhachariar, Thuraiyur Rajagopala Sarma. He was a noble teacher who not only taught music but gave food and shelter to many disciples at a time. One of his earliest disciples was T.K. Sessa Iyengar who joined him when he was barely 8 years. Even at that time he had Ranga Sastri and Mannargudi Santhanam Iyengar learning music under him.

## STYLE OF SINGING

Narasimha Iyengar was blessed with a high-pitched rich voice and was a fine exponent of the ragas Kedaragowla and Nayaki, in which he rendered intricate pallavis. Hence he was often called Kedaragowla Narasimha Iyengar. I recall a memorable recital by Ariyakudi

Ramanuja Iyengar at the Central College of Karnatic Music, Adyar when he gave a brilliant exposition of raga alpana of Kedaragowla and followed it up with a Thana and a tricky Pallavi which earned the encomiums of the Vidwans there. The late Musiri Subramanya Aiyar was visibly moved. When he paid a handsome tribute to Ramanuja Iyengar at the close of the concert, the musician humbly replied: "It was Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar's pichchai. I learnt Nayaki also from him".

His style of singing was lofty, dignified and elaborate and spread over all the *sthayis*. Improvisation in swara was highly imaginative and varied and of indescribable beauty. He evinced an astonishing ability in singing swara syllables in lightning speed. He had in swara singing that degree of speed which Maha Vaidyanatha Aiyar had in akara and the finale was a creative swara. His disciple T.K. Sessa Iyengar said: "My guru's music was brimming with a sense of beauty. He was extremely dexterous in *gati-bheda*, but it was with this sense of beauty, ease and grace that he used to execute this technique. Even today Hindustani musicians use only 'mora' for the denouement. "Thadinginathom" has not got the beauty of the 'mora'. The 'moras' handled by my guru were innumerable. His rich voice flowed with effortless ease in *sancharas* in *madhya* and *mandara* registers and drowned as it were the audience in a flood of *nada* and made them forget themselves. Maha Vaidyanatha Aiyar was famous for ragas Sankarabharana and Bhairavi; Patnam Subramaniya Aiyar for Begada and Nattakurinji. My guru was famous for Kedaragowla, Begadu and Nayaki. He sang elaborate pallavis in these ragas".

## AUSTERE

Of grand build and fair complexion, he was extremely austere and ascetic in his daily life and was an imposing figure on the platform where he wore only *yoga-veshti*. He gave a recital before the Mysore Maharaja with this *yoga-veshti* dress and was exempted from wearing the black coat and turban. When showered with lace cloth and gold killets

he passed them on to his disciple Madurai Srirangam Iyengar with the remark: "I have no use for them. Srirangam take it". Apart from the time spent on ablutions, he was all the while engaged in Nada yoga. He spent the last years of his life in Srirangam chanting Lord Ranganatha's name and teaching music to an earnest band of disciples. He passed away peacefully on a Narasimha Jayanthi day at the age of 88, his birthday.



## ART & RELIGION

"Art has a very definite relation to religion. Religion to me is emotion, mind and body turned inwards to become one with the Divine. Art is the Divine coming down and becoming one with the body, emotion and mind. Religion is Divinity expressed inwardly. Art is Divinity expressed outwardly. You cannot separate Religion from Art, and when one is creating a piece of Art, one should be inspired by the same, lofty idealism as when one goes into a temple or church to worship. The artist worships in his own way through his Art. That is why Art has always been hard or evil when inspiration has been lacking, and great when religious inspiration has been lofty.

There is an ethereal, let us call it a spiritual, quality towards which a dancer, a musician, a painter, especially an Indian artist, can aspire. It is a quality which touches the very heart of creative forces. I say especially an Indian Artist because India represents and is a reservoir of spiritual force"

—Rukmani Arundale



## Criticism in Karnatik Music\*

By

K. S. MAHADEVAN

Reviewing concerts in Karnatik music for the general public is a comparatively recent exercise and is probably not more than a few decades old. It is possibly co-existent with the development of the organized music Sabha emerging from the early thirties; and that organisation process started in the great metropolitan cities of Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Trivandrum etc., where music lovers gathered and felt the desire for hearing Karnatak music—an almost atavistic need for them. The Sabhas in these Cities are today the foremost patrons of Karnatak music, the significance of which will be felt incisively, if one notes the fact that the former centres where classical music originated and prospered viz., Kakinada, Tanjore, Tiruchirapally, Pudukkottah, Madura etc. cannot boast of an organised club or Sabha purveying classical music as systematically, regularly and on as large a scale as the metropolitan Sabhas mentioned above.

### A NEW CALLING

The growth and proliferation of such concert sponsoring organisations has also given rise to the emergence of a new calling—music criticism, which has made enormous strides with the aid of the daily and weekly press. In the good old days, say, prior to the thirties, comprehensive appreciation of classical music was confined to the few experts who knew the basic principles of raga, kriti and laya.

\*Based on a Radio talk given by the author on the 13th October 78 at the Madras station of A. I. R.

Shortcomings on the part of a musician were probably just casually mentioned by the knowing few in the course of a bath in the river or tank or in the fields. The multitude were satisfied with the strength of voice of the vocalist or its sweetness, technique being rarely discussed if at all.

### SPREAD OF KNOWLEDGE

All these are completely changed in today's concerts. Out of the hundreds who listen, there are atleast a few dozens who, with the Argus eye of a traffic constable watching transgressions of the rules, note the occasions when the vocalist or the violinist departed from the 'Sruthi', his ventures from the established murchana of a raga, his failure to arrive at the correct "eduppu" in swaraprasthara etc. It is an undisputed fact that these aberrations from the canonical procedures are noted, talked about and possibly, canvassed too, against the artist. Woe to him who ignores these mass manifestations of musical judgement.

It is against such a background of really enlightened public opinion that the culture of concert reviewing and music criticism has to function. Needless to say, the critic's responsibilities have increased manifold. And moreover, it is one thing to 'feel' a certain elation over an artist's brilliance or a feeling of let-down when he commits a solecism. It is quite another to put it down adequately in a review with space limitations. And hence has arisen the need for a technique of reporting that makes tall demands on the reviewer's depth of knowledge, his ability to

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on the actual errors and his capacity to express himself with cogency, logic and clarity, if not vividness. His criticisms have to be based on rationalisation of his intuitive or acquired musical experience because no one can constructively criticise something of which he has no previous actual or intuitive understanding nor can he arrive at any value-judgements on what he hears without an adequate background. Into each of his judgements upon music have to go the whole man that heredity, early training or backgrounds have made him. His criticism has to avoid being an attempt to repeat wrongly in one medium what perhaps has rightly been done in another.

### SHORTCOMINGS

It is not claimed that music criticism has always conformed to these basic principles. Such shortcomings as have generally been noticed stem from the prevailing confusion between the functions of a musicologist and those of a music 'critic'. While a musicologist without artistic experience is possible and always probable, criticism without artistic experience can hardly be constructive or useful, and if it is not, the gibe will be flung at him that he preaches an art that he knows nothing about.

The critic's whole problem is that "you cannot measure musical performances as you do cloth or timber, by a measure that never alters" — a measure that has, moreover, to take into account changed sociological conditions; for instance, no musician can afford today to indulge in all those marathon raga alpanas extending past midnight that a Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer was known to do in the good old spacious days. Again,

no musician can expect to perform, before modern audiences, with a percussion ensemble consisting of mridangam, ghatam, kanjira, dholak, moharsingh and konnakol which Conjeevaram "Nayana" Subramanya Pillai often had in his concerts and in which the complex Pallavi and the Garagantuan "thaniavarthanam" following it lasted for at least an hour. We in our younger days put up with such events perhaps because our attitudes were a triumph of hope over experience.

Modern man, however, will not stand such elaborate and tedious displays, not only because time is short and more valuable but because he feels that such dexterity in laya can be compressed in smaller and certainly more elegant modules of laya prasthara or Pallavi. Tastes have changed and tastes are a symptom of people.

### THE CRITIC'S CASE

The critic these days has to come to terms with the fact that he has a vast readership to cater to, that his audiences are by and large knowledgeable about many aspects of our music and therefore make their own value-judgements which the critic dare not differ from except by the most carefully argued standpoints of criticism.

Now let us see his side of the picture—

"The trouble with musical criticism as a profession is that it means a great deal of concert reporting. It involves a fearful amount of the most appalling monotony on earth. It involves physical as well as mental pain for the poor critics. The average concert performer inflicts an actual positive physical pain upon the critic. The average man can only dimly imagine what a man with a sensitive musical ear suffers when a violinist or a singer plays or sings persistently out of tune during the greater part of an evening"

.....The poor critic has to find fresh epithets each time for the same performer for perhaps 20 unhappy years..... this is martyrdom.

The number of concerts he attends is sufficient to wear his faculties out in the course of a few years. The finer the man's brain, the more critical it is by instinct, the more baneful is the bondage. Worse than this is the effect of sitting in judgement, day after day, week after week, on all kinds of artists and performers for the benefit of a somewhat uncritical public that has not been trained to look to first principles".

The above criticisms, let me hasten to add, were written 40 years ago by the greatest musical critic of all time, Ernest Newman, of *Western music*. As Wordsworth said, how one longs to say Newman, "thou shouldst be living at this hour" in India.

The picture generally painted of critics by disgruntled artists is often a false one. Criticism is not merely a kicking-up of heels but is, or should be, an attempt to induce other people to see the thing as the critic sees it—steadily and whole—especially the totally musical nature of musical communication.

### REVIEWER'S WEAKNESSES

Some of the critics' foibles have to be stressed also. One is the habit of dwelling too much in the past and projecting memories of a past generation to the present. However hallowed may be such memories, they are apt to be misleading. One instance will suffice: A. I. R. from time to time plays the recordings of the violinists who are now no more but who in their day remained at the centre of the stage for decades. On hearing such recordings, one's faculties are sharply brought alive to the immense advances made in violin playing these days. (It is wrong to

label the old masters as inferiors—the stark truth is that they seemed splendid to the tastes of those years). A thing is not good merely because it is old. Sophistication of listeners, changes in taste? Critics have to take note of them anyway.

### COMPARISONS

A second tendency is to make comparisons with someone's style or method of the past when judging the performance of the present generation. Time never stands still in Art—a Picasso or Matisse can never be judged keeping a Rembrandt or Titian in mind, any more than one can judge Dr. Balamurali Krishna keeping his guru Ramakrishna Pantulu or Tachur Singaracharlu at the back of one's mind. The touchstones become different. Chakravaham raga was a totally new event for the audience at Ettayyapuram when Mahavaidyanatha Sivan sang it. Today, although the same raga is still attractive, what dazzles a listener is say, the alapana of Ranjani, a sketch of Dharmavathy. Just fancy audience reaction today if someone sings the raga Ghanta which was apparently very common 100 years ago—Tygaraja has composed many kritis in it—but is totally ignored today in favour of Dhanyasi. The critic ignores these trends at his peril.

### PECKING

Thirdly, it is wrong and unethical to fasten upon every little error that a musician may commit in a long recital. Heavens don't fall if a seventy-year old master omits a lagu or dhritam in the tala. What ought to count in his case is only the brilliance of the flame that the candle of his experience and the wick of his aesthetic instinct produce. Do we apply such meticulous standards to a

film, a play or even a piece of sculpture, literature or any other work of Art? Why be hypercritical where music is concerned? The root of the matter is that critics become captious when their ego impels them to exaggerate small lapses and blinds them to the overall virtuosity of musically creative efforts. Critics may come and go, but musicians will go on for ever. A great art may have ups and downs but never perishes.

As Alan Walker has put it, "Music's value is inherent. A poor work cannot survive for long, irrespective of the propaganda poured out on its behalf. By the same token, a good work cannot be permanently suppressed merely because critics do not comprehend it. Criticism

is wasting its time when it attempts to control the flow of artistic creation. It will simply be swept away by the current".

That the flow of creative events can be observed but not controlled will be evident from the following story which Ernest Newman was fond of telling: There was once a village idiot. Every day he used to visit his tiny railway station and stand on the platform waving a flag. Promptly, at noon the big London-bound express would come thundering down the tracks and roar through the station with the village idiot waving it on. Having fulfilled this crucial duty, he would then depart until the next day, when the ritual would be repeated all over again.



In proportion as men can command the immediate vulgar applause of others, they become indifferent to that which is remote and difficult of attainment. We take pains only when we are compelled to do it.

—William Hazlitt.

\* \* \*

It gave you just the same emotion as listening to Mozart, so melodious and so gay, with its under-current of melancholy, which filled you with such great a contentment that you felt as though the flesh had no longer any hold on you. For a few blissful minutes, you were purged of all grossness and the confusion of life was dissolved in perfect loveliness.

—Somerset Maugham.

\* \* \*

Beauty dwells in harmony not in contrasts, and harmony means affinity; hence delicacy of the senses is required in order to perceive it. The aesthetic harmony of nature and of art escapes those whose senses are dull. The world is then restricted and common-place. In the world around us there exist inexhaustible sources of aesthetic enjoyment, in the midst of which men move about as if they possessed no senses, or, like the lower animals, seeking enjoyment in strong, sharp sensations, since only these come within their powers of perception.

Maria Montessori.

\* \* \*

Man does not live by bread alone; it is the spiritual growth rather than increase of numbers which counts in the progress of humanity. Without the artistic spirit stimulating her daily life, India will lack the divine force which created her civilisation and one of the greatest intellectual empires of the world.

E.B. Havell

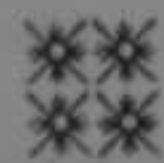
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## News and Notes

Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna presided over the 52nd annual music Conference and concerts of the Music Academy, Madras, commencing on 21st December 1978 and was the recipient of the coveted title of "Sangitha Kalanidhi" which was conferred on him at the Sadas on 1st January 1979. Dr. Balamurali is most typical of the *avant garde* generation of young musicians typical in his erudition, his peculiar brand of the wind of change blowing through the corridors of music halls and in the unfailing, seductive appeal of his concerts. One can never miss the spark of creativity, the spark of personality and wit in him, whether it is a concert or a conversation. His music seldom runs on predestinate grooves. It is a mixture of naturalness and calculation. Like Ariel, he can 'ride on the curled clouds'. Above all, he can please any audience. In fact, he is a true example of the complex nature of musical ability. Last but not least, he is second to none in giving spontaneous encouragement to young talent to come up. His inaugural address at the Academy contained very frank views on classical music as it is taught, sung and patronised today. It was a highly stimulating session at the Music Academy this season with this mercurial personality to guide the deliberations.

The Gods, one must presume, have been directing the musical career of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer throughout

and have necessarily become accessories after the fact of his name and fame. Age has neither staled his style nor withered his musicianship, which week after week continues to draw thousands even while, for many other musicians, the audience remains thin. The decision of the Kerala University to confer the degree of Doctor of Letters on Semmangudi, who has done so much to popularise Karnatic music in Kerala and more particularly Maharaja Swathi Thirunals' creative work, does not come a day too soon. By honouring him, Kerala is honouring a tradition of great aesthetic splendour in classical music.

\* \* \*

Sangitha Kalanidhi D.K. Pattammal presided over the 46th Music Conference and Festival of the Indian Fine Arts Society which commenced at Madras on the 18th December, '78. Smt. DKP is a haven of taste and erudition in Karnatik music, with a deeply ingrained habit of mind that is not sure that novelty is a good thing in itself and does not seek popular applause. This great artiste has made an immense contribution towards all that is sound and great in our music and particularly the music of Muthuswami Dikshitar whose Kriti constitute her masterpieces. Through the lambency of her style, the perfect sense of proportion in dealing with raga alapana, Kriti, neraval and swaras and the un-obtrusive display of technical mastery in rhythm. DKP has carved for herself a niche in

\* \* \*

the hearts of all who value sober musicianship. The grace of her music is only the outward expression of her inner harmony to which a lifetime of steady and silent devotion to ideals has contributed. What Lady Oxford said of some one else applies to Smt. Pattammal: "She is a very complete person, part of a golden mixture of character and judgement".

\* \* \*

Dr. M.L. Vasanthakumari presided over the 36th annual festival of the Tamil Isai Sangam which commenced on 22nd December 1978 at Madras. Dr. MLV is one of those artists with a supreme endowment of the cardinal virtues of inventiveness, daring, command of musical architecture of a charming type and withal, an urge for creative expression. She achieves style by her frank indulgence in virtuosity, by the distillation of the essences of ragas, common and rare. The craftsman in her is duly balanced by her flair for the magnificent. The result is that she is able to present infinitely varied textures and tapestries of classical music. The romantic streak in her enables her to be equally at home in light and classical music. The passing years have imported to her music, a commanding stature replete with stuff and allure.

\* \* \*

Greatness of resource in one direction is usually equal to adaptation in another. Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman's demonstration at the Max Mueller Bhavan on Novem-

ber 9th on the evolution of violin as a musical instrument, its striking superiority over other instruments and its future potential in terms of Karnatik music surpassed in quality of thought stimulation even his violin playing. In the latter, he has enlarged the compact world of melody beyond the dimensions any one dared predict for it 20 years ago and it is but natural that the urge for exposition should now grip him. The listening public will be the beneficiaries thereof. The Award of Sangeeta Natak Akademi is recognition of his services to music.

He quoted references in Indian cultural history to show that the bow originated in India 2000 years ago (Ravanastra) and the possibility of producing continuous sound by bowing was visualised. But violin playing actually came to India about 400 years ago, and it very much suited our music. Varahappier was presented with one and he played publicly at Madurai. During Tyagaraja's time, violin was played to him and later Baluswami Dikshitar followed. Vadivelu in Swathi Tirunal's court was rewarded with an Ivory violin. Lalgudi claimed that whatever could be done with the human voice can also be done on the violin-aspects like volume, Gamaka, pitch variation, adjustment to other instruments, speed variation, vilamba kala and tonal modulations. Sri. Jayaraman's demonstration was unique and stimulating.

KSM.



## Tradition and Talent in Karnatic Music

By

Prof. R. K. RAMANATHAN

The preservation of tradition in Karnatic music has been the subject of acute controversy in recent times. The general feeling among old-timers is that tradition is dying out and that we are well on the way to lose the precious heritage of the past. Is such a feeling justified? That is the question which this article purports to answer.

### THE ART CYCLE

In the history of art it is not uncommon to come across a period of recession soon after a period of creative splendour. The advent of the Trinity witnessed an unprecedented output, duly followed by a galaxy of interpreters who made it their life's mission to extract to the last ounce the aesthetic essence of immortal compositions. The age of interpretation succeeded the age of creation. When a transcendental genius like Thyagaraja bursts on the scene, the rest of the world has to wait by in all humility until his outpourings are exhausted. Then follows the gathering in of the golden harvest together with the prodigal feast that it inevitably leads to. I feel that we are still passing through that period even after one and a half centuries.

The only difference between yesterday and today is that great interpreters have disappeared from the scene and only good ones hold it now. This opinion is confined to present day vocal music only, instrumental music being another story. However, the point at issue is that however potent a historical force might be, it is bound to lose its hold on us. For one

thing, we of a later period are separated by a greater distance of time from the original source of inspiration. Secondly many other environmental factors are eroding our sense of tradition as, for example, the rise of the cinema and the rest of the mass media. Science has come into close alliance with music to make it more of a corporate entertainment than ever before. The uninitiated are made to partake of it as much as the initiated. The former being the majority, music has to be re-oriented, not to say diluted, in their favour. Thus the bonds of tradition, have to be somewhat slackened in order to meet the new requirements. Let us take a few specific instances. No one today is prepared to listen to the same raga being sung for several hours. But among musicians of the past as well as the listeners it used to be a common experience. It may be that the artistes of that generation were not in the habit of frittering away their attention in too many directions.

### COMPACT MASTERY

They believed in mastering a small area and did it to perfection. Within that sphere they could lay claim to supreme authority. For example, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer is said to have had the smallest repertoire of any known musician of merit. But his mastery over it was so complete that the compositions in question gained a fullness and finality of aesthetic content and contour never since altered. The Kriti 'Vatapi Ganapathim Bhajeham' in Hamsadhvani is a typical example. To this day, we have not been able to improve upon the 'Sangathis' with

which he embellished it. Similarly, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer used to say that no one can elaborate Sahana raga and sing "Giripai Nelakonna" the Kriti as Bikshandarkoil could. When a musician's hold on a particular musical item becomes so complete, others will be a bit chary of rendering it lest their rendering should fall short of the accepted best.

### INTENSIVE CARE

Anyway, it may safely be inferred that in the past the emphasis was more on intensive cultivation of a limited repertoire. To put it another way, more importance was attached to the creative aspect of singing rather than to its opposite. It did not matter how many compositions an artiste knew but *how well* he knew them. The greater part of a concert was devoted to the spacious development of ragas, two or three at the most. To hazard a guess, an overall atmosphere of tranquility must have pervaded the whole concert. If a Pallavi had to be sung, both the *mathu* and the *dhathu* were bodily lifted from some celebrated krithi and sung. A simple and straightforward neraval and swaraprasthara in two speeds was about just enough to do full justice to it. It was the display of one's *manodharma* that constituted the life and soul of music.

The graded arrangement of a series of set compositions with the Varna at the beginning and the Tillana at the end was never known then. In fact Varnas, Javalis and Tillanas had not yet been composed in sufficient numbers and the few that were there had not been accepted as concert-worthy. This was the state of affairs in the first few decades of the post-Tyagaraja period. In making the above observations I have had to venture beyond my experience.

### PRESENTDAY CONCERT PATTERN

But coming down to the thirties of this century, I feel safer and surer of my observations. The present day concert pattern was set by the great Ariyakudi. His career began at a time when the Gurukula system was still strongly entrenched and music had to be learnt at the feet of a master. Of course he belonged to the great line that descends from Tyagaraja himself. He seems to have had access to the largest number of concert pieces of any successful musician of his day. When he attained popularity there were few to equal him. He gave concerts across the length and breadth of the country. Naturally, the new orientation that he gave to a Karnatic music concert came to stay. The reason for his composition-packed concerts can only be imagined.

He was a strict classicist and tradition was in his blood. Every bit of his music was pre-meditated and pre-planned. One could never find fault with him for overdoing a raga alapana or a neraval or a swara prasthara. With him, even the creative part had become encapsulated as it were, into a few significant phrases which he reeled off with a mechanical regularity. Perhaps he did not have a lively enough imagination, which could go on creating ever fresh effects or for that matter, a pliable enough voice, which could readily respond to the demands of his imagination. Nevertheless, his concerts had a unique appeal of their own. Characterised by vigour and verve, they helped the public to hear and appreciate many compositions unheard till then.

### A MUSICAL STRATEGIST

Well, the notable thing is that Ariyakudi's pre-eminence in the music world set the seal of approval on the kutcheri

pattern that has continued till our own day. For all practical purposes, here was a break with the past in one sense. It might have been done to suit one's individual needs but by a quirk of circumstances, it has come to be generally accepted. Everything else was traditional about him except this. I would like to call him a musical strategist of the first order. His pallavi exposition was always a treat whether it was a minor or a major one. You would be bowled over by his swift, clean and methodical disposal of any item that came under his treatment. As for musical bits, he was *the* man for it. Crisp classicism was in evidence even here.

All in all Ariyakudi was a veritable lion of traditionalism in all but one respect, namely, bringing into vogue the singing of an enormous number of items. This habit had one advantage in so far as it enabled the singer to present a broad musical spectrum. But in the hands of artistes less accomplished than he, this habit was wont to produce a colourless and mechanised type of music, as is often the case with so many today. For all his eminence, Ariyakudi was never known to take pride in having initiated this habit.

### MAHARAJAPURAM

As against the well drilled regimented type represented by Ariyakudi, there was Maharajapuram with his many-splendoured music. He refused to be straight-jacketed into any system of music. His music came gushing like a mountain stream full of inspiration and charged with lyricism. It flowed with reckless ease, sometimes even violating the code of classical rigour. It must be said to his credit that even in the era of classicism he managed to leaven his music with certain exotic touches which were somewhat alien

to the system. By all standards he was a romantic endowed with a rich and resonant voice and a creative imagination of no mean order. It is said that he often took up the very items sung by Ariyakudi and invested them with a fresh beauty and vitality, that thrilled the listeners. New vistas were opened up by this visionary. His voice production was quite sound. He never indulged in vocal distortions of any kind. An open mouthed and full-throated articulation ensured a smooth melodic line. Graceful lines and curves lent an almost feminine charm to his music. Unfortunately he shone with fitful gleam on the musical horizon. But he did exert a most wholesome influence on our music, especially in regard to the use of the voice and manodharma.

### SEMMANGUDI

Another luminary soon stepped into the limelight and drew public attention by his vigorous style. It was Semmangudi, who is happily still with us. He is a curious blend of classicism and romanticism. Vocal music became a close competitor to Nagaswaram. There was an enormous amount of industry behind every phrase that he sang. The credit of having tamed an intractable voice surely goes to him. He had a far-reaching effect on consolidating tradition in our music. Even now in the evening of his life he is a power to reckon with from the point of view of tradition.

### G.N.B.

At about the same time another star of the first magnitude appeared on the musical horizon. G.N.B., as he was affectionately known, set the imagination of the younger generation on fire with his unique style. He was endowed with a resonant voice and a matchless interpre-

tative skill. There was nothing that he touched but did not adorn. Even hackneyed songs emerged with a sparkle and a gaiety, when handled by him. A preponderance of *birkas* gave a distinct flavour to his style. With a resourceful voice and a fertile imagination he created a sound tapestry of a rich and rare beauty. Basically his voice was made for speed. His vocal chords vibrated with nervous sensitivity turning out phrases with phenomenal rapidity. It was a suicidal gift for any musician to possess but GNB's superior intellect transformed it into a marvel of musical expression. It was quite obvious that the secret of his success was his control over Laya. It helped him to check the musical outpourings and achieve first-rate musical eloquence. Many a minor composition of Tyagaraja that had fallen into disuse came to be invested with a new lustre by him. He dressed them out in new "sangathis", every one of which carried the stamp of his genius. Over and above all this, he had a magnetic stage personality which greatly enhanced his musical appeal. He was a romantic to the core inasmuch as he revelled in brave new experiments in the sphere of vocal music. To cite one instance, no musician of an earlier period had ever dreamt of singing ragas like Malavi, Vasanthabhairavi, Andolika and Jayanthasri. GNB had all the virtues of an explorer. That is how he succeeded in spotting and mapping new musical territories.

#### A NEW GENRE

G.N.B. was an artiste of a new genre in more than one sense. First and foremost he was an Honours graduate of the Madras University—a qualification which no artist of the previous generation could boast of. By dint of his academic training he was able to bring a new assessment to

bear on Karnatic music. The stuffy classicism of the past with its cabined and cribbed attitude underwent a spring-cleaning at his hands. In other words, with him came 'the wind of change'. As if to prove the truth of this statement he made his concerts models of an artless art—that is to say, an art that conceals the sweat and toil of the practice-room. At the end of a concert he looked as fresh as at its beginning. A slick efficiency was his hall-mark. He never indulged in violent physical movements that had come to be accepted as inevitable in others. It was as if he allowed his voice to do everything for him under the direction of his intellect while the rest of his body had nothing else to do but be a passive partner in the goings on. The face exuded charm and the voice conveyed the musical message. The total effect was one of perfect aesthetic contentment. We were made to realise that singing was the most civilised and urbane form of entertainment given to man.

#### MUSIRI—CLASSICIST

At the other end of the scale was Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer who specialised in slow tempo. Quite a few shining qualities marked him out as a classicist of no mean order. He could thrill you by his spotless presentation of krithis in a leisurely pace. The text of the song was chastely and meaningfully delivered. One could sense the tremendous degree of involvement in the singer. All the subtle graces received their due emphasis. As the concert proceeded the voice gained a metallic ring and when it ascended to the top register it was in a state of extreme tension—all his neck muscles visibly bulged and his jugular veins swollen to the bursting point—and there was an exhilaration rarely experienced in concert halls.

#### BRINDA—MUKTA

As the natural heirs to the Dhanam school, Brinda and Mukta have done no small service to our music by their chaste style. They have maintained the purity of Karnatic music for over four decades. Though we cannot look for an expansive Manodharma, we could be sure of a fair sample of it. They did signal service in two directions; first, in perpetuating the singing of *padas* in proper style; secondly, in bringing to light many rare compositions of Syama Sastri and Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer. Undoubtedly their style of singing possessed a distinct Karnatic flavour and as such richly deserves to be treasured. Above all it is a model to the younger generation.

#### MASTERS OF LAYA

There is one other pair of stalwarts of the classical tradition who must take their due place in the present hierarchy, I mean the Alathur Brothers. They did earn for themselves a unique position by specialising in the Pallavi tradition, which by all standards has come to be regarded as the backbone of Karnatic classical tradition. A few other musicians have been by common consent put into this category. But none of them could achieve that rare blend of Bhava and Laya which the Alathur Brothers could. They had put themselves through such rigorous training as would guarantee a faultless rendering. Assisted by a competent percussionist—and this was a necessary condition for the success of their concerts—they could produce a stunningly dramatic effect. When swaraprasthara is mechanically contrived but methodical, when the build-up is gradually and cleverly planned, it is bound to have at its conclusion, the same clinching effect as that of a box whose lid is snapped shut. The Brothers could indulge in the cut and thrust of musical dialogue

to wonderful effect. When they worked up to the finale they could make the listeners gasp with astonishment. It was a rare treat indeed.

In nourishing the Pallavi tradition they did yeoman service to our music. The very stance that Subbier assumed while singing a pallavi was totally gripping like that of a heavy-weight boxer ready to enter the ring. The laya was superbly under control. He never faltered, never used false beats between any two counts of a tala even in vilambakala. It was an endless source of inspiration to an accomplished percussionist. For one's musical reputation to rest on the ability to handle pallavi is itself a triumph of classical tradition. It is given to few.

#### MELODY QUEEN

There have been two great voices of this generation—one of which belongs to M. S. Subbulakshmi and the other to the late Chembai. The former is by far the most widely known of all Karnatic musicians. She commands a wide repertoire and an almost universal popularity. Her style is characterised by an assiduous application and a zest for preserving the purity of our music. In spite of her immense popularity she has not diluted her classical rigour. She is not obliged to, gifted as she is with the most enviable of voices. The point is that as a medium of musical expression her voice is very nearly perfect and as such makes any type of music agreeable to the majority. Despite this natural advantage she has spared no pains in perfecting the medium and in acquiring the necessary musicianship, with the result that she has become one of the most successful exponents of Karnatic music of all time. What is more, she has maintained her unchallenged supremacy for more than three decades. It redounds to her credit that while maintaining



classical purity, she has struck out new paths for others to follow. I have in mind her laudable efforts in engrafting North Indian elements on our system. Such experiments augur well for the future of our music.

### CHEMBAI

Chembai's contribution to the preservation of the Karnatic tradition is rather moderate. He neither enriched it nor impoverished it. Though his style left much to be desired, he left a deep impress by his clarion voice. His is a classic instance of a gifted voice going with a poor style. *Sruti* and *laya* were both under control but musical conception and expression were not of much account. Nevertheless, singers like Chembai helped to bridge the gulf between the *cognoscenti* and the common run of listeners by virtue of their gifted voice. They had something to offer to both these types.

Enough has now been said about the preservation and propagation of classical Karnatic music by the older generation of artistes. Nearly four decades of this century have been dominated by them. Theirs is perhaps the second illustrious band of interpreters in the Post-Thyagaraja period. And now we have only two or three of them surviving and even these are approaching the end of their career.

### MADURAI MANI IYER

Yet another artiste of the old order was Madurai Mani Iyer who by his inimitable style, left a deep impress on the minds of his listeners. Unlike the others, he defies categorisation. Under severe physical handicaps, he developed a style of his own which was original in every sense of the word. His sense of *sruti* was remarkable. Gifted with a voice free from flaws, he could create a sound fabric of uncommon

richness. Every bit was characterised by a matchless purity of outline. With a few isolated phrases he could breathe life into a raga, which ability was an indication of his uncanny aesthetic perception. But, by and large, it was his *swarakalpana* that placed him in a class by himself. His *swaras*—mostly *sarvalaghu*—were compounded of *ganta swaras* in groups of twos and threes which positively cascaded with unpremeditated ease. This was a new genre in *swara kalpana* and as such it was little wonder that it caught the imagination of the learned and the lay listeners alike.

### MOST SINCERE

Moreover, Mani Iyer was an artiste of a most dependable sort. I mean that no one ever went disappointed after a concert of his. This was the direct outcome of his sterling sincerity. The concert platform was for him, in the words of Sir Thomas Beecham, a place of penance. His concerts exuded piety, so much so that one felt that one was attending an extended prayer meeting conducted by a melodious singer. Every performance was with him a heart-and-soul affair. It could be said of him that he lived only to sing. The circumstances in which he was placed were partly responsible for strengthening this attitude in him. He was committed to lifelong bachelorhood and was singularly free from the besetting weaknesses of a music career. These circumstances must have instilled into him a high sense of vocation which became more and more purified as age advanced. But it must be said that his style of singing was so unique that it was impossible to perpetuate it. It had to die with him.

### THE NEW GENERATION

A new generation has usurped the concert platform but what a fall there has

been can be realised only by one who has lived in both the worlds. Such a person cannot help noticing a general loss, a palpable decline in musical stature today. The Titans have disappeared and a veritable throng of Lilliputians have come to occupy their places. We have become the legatees of a music which is uniformly dull, repetitive and soulless. A time has come when a musician does not command an audience but cringes for it. He is obliged to hawk his wares around in the hope of finding buyers. His vocal stamina which is already on the weaker side is further weakened by his dependence on scientific gadgets. He is at the mercy of Sabha secretaries, reviewers and impresarios, not to say successful accompanists. He tries to grab all the umpteen opportunities that modern conditions have created, as for example, broadcasting engagements and foreign assignments. Some of these opportunities were denied to their elders.

### CRAZE FOR NOVELTY

Anyway, the over-all effect of them is that they have successfully robbed the artistes of their traditional moorings and have made them victims of rootlessness. They are compelled to resort to gimmicks in order to win public favour. In a frantic search for novelty, the entire corpus of composed music is ransacked. *Kritis* which were hitherto regarded as jealously guarded gems are being bandied about from one singer to another until they are drained of all their vitality. There is a steady process of democratization which is undermining the very foundations of tradition. A vast horde of ambitious aspirants is being fed on this lean fare and are waiting to leap into the limelight. The whole world of music is geared to numerical expansion. The sooner we stop it the safer will it be for the future of our music.

It is *not* advisable to stop the spread of musical knowledge. What is required is

the suppression of premature efforts at publicity, especially those made by persons of mediocre merit. On the one hand, there is a general slackening of the rigorous discipline that is essential for artistic expression. On the other, there is a tempting array of opportunities too good to be turned down. Bad music and blind patronage feed on each other with the result that the general level has sunk to an unprecedented low. The stalwarts of the older generation have also been responsible to some extent for this state of affairs. Long after they had passed their musical prime, they continued their public appearances and debased the general taste by inferior stuff. Past glory seemed to cover up a multitude of shortcomings. Public patronage continued to be exploited with undiminished vigour. Thus listening standards went down simultaneously with singing standards. This paved the way for the emergence of a kind of music which is irredeemably second-rate, not to say second-hand. It is a sad day for Karnatic music when even playback singers have come to be accorded full classical status.

The foregoing remarks, I am afraid, may be considered as a wholesale condemnation of present day vocal music, which it is not my intention to make. Fortunately, there are a few young artistes who have the capacity to give us at least some glimpses of the departed glory. They are our only hope in these depressing circumstances. It remains to be seen how effectively they can act as transmitters of tradition to posterity. As good luck would have it, we have amidst us a good number of gifted violinists and percussionists—a subject which warrants a separate article, as they could be relied upon to transmit the vital elements of our tradition to future generations. The names of artists mentioned above are meant to be illustrative and not exhaustive. No reflection on others is intended.



Success is only a delayed failure

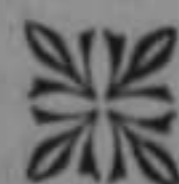
—Graham Greene

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## The Elements of Indian Music\*

By

DENNIS GRAY STOLL

At the very beginning I feel there are a few misconceptions that should be cleared from our path. First, there is the popular fallacy that Indian music is impossibly un-scientific and eccentric because it has twenty-two notes within the compass of the western octave. I have sometimes heard English musicians, who should know better, refer to it airily as "confusing clusters of quarter-tones" or a "muddling microtonal mess".

It is curious that so few westerners seem to have noticed that the 22 *srutis* of Indian music are precisely the same as the divisions of the European octave before the adoption of Equal Temperament by us in the seventeenth century. Even today our western notation is based on 7 naturals + 7 sharps + 7 flats, which, if the final note of the octave is added, makes 22 notes. The compromise of Equal Temperament, whereby some of our naturals and sharps and flats in practice became same note, was purely a local convenience of harmonic music for gaining access to a greater number of possible modulations.

For Indians to have followed suit with their nonharmonic music would have been indeed eccentric and unscientific. India must, of course, keep her 22 *srutis* intact to maintain the true intonation of her modal scales, the melodic integrity of her *raga*.

### MISCONCEPTIONS

Indian music is most certainly not a "microtonal mess". Where the misunder-

\* Lecture delivered to the Royal India Society's Music Group.

standing arose was, perhaps, in western musicians mistaking its intricate microtonal ornaments and graces, "gamakas" and so forth, for actual notes of the scale. I fear that this microtonal misconception has sunk deep, and needs as much digging out and exposing to the healthy air of reconsideration as our western error in thinking that only our method of voice production is beautiful.

### VOCAL PREJUDICE

One answer to our vocal prejudice is that Indian singers don't sing through their noses. The typically eastern restraint of theirs is apt to offend many western ears. Not mine, however. The art of singing through the nose has been carried to a fine degree of perfection in the west. But Indian music would have nothing to gain by it. After all, the sensuous attractiveness of the voice has always taken third place to technical suitability and musicianship in India. "Our voice production," a Hindu saint said, "is like the outward poverty of God, whereby His glory is nakedly revealed". I think it's better that it should remain so.

You may agree that the Indian voice has spiritual loveliness. Or you may feel very English about it. Perhaps you have an enormous conviction that you don't like Indian singers because they do nothing but wail through their noses! If so, it is because your ultra-Englishness has made you love a paradox to the extent of saying the opposite of what you mean. However, a simple experiment, in which you pinch your nose and sing, will doubtless convince you of the truth of this nasal matter.

Indians normally don't sing through their noses. Englishmen invariably do.

### THE CORRECT ANGLES

I hope nobody is going to be intimidated by the apparent queerness of my introduction to the elements of Indian music; because, as with all the cultural elements of India, the queerness will largely vanish if we make our approach with an Indian outlook. What is the sense of studying Indian music if we intend to remain wholly English? Such a study is bound to be dead unless we bring it alive through our awareness of the other man's point of view.

For instance there is the question of our attitude to listening. Indians don't normally sit on plush seats, frowning at those who sing their favourite piece, in a sternly critical mood. They sit on the good plain earth and, as Tagore said, "are content to perfect the song in their own mind by the force of their own feeling". An appreciative Indian audience often cries aloud, intent on getting the last drop of what they call *rasa*, from the music they hear. *It is as if the music were within them and not outside them, and they were completing it in their own minds, and giving audible expression to their fulfilled feelings.*

### RASAVADANA

This opens up a wonderful vista; the Hindu theory of musical appreciation through *rasavadana*, the emotional tasting of spiritual essences. Of course, we all see that music cannot exist for us without perception through the senses. But the Hindu looks beyond that. He sees that all the best Indian music aims in its effect to be supersensuous. *Rasa*-appreciation implies for him a plane of consciousness on

which spiritual and physical appreciation become the same thing.

Rasavadana is not an exclusively Hindu idea. Poet-philosophers from Kabir to Tagore, who may be said to have spoken for India rather than for any one religion, have held this theory, too. Putting it into practice comes fairly easily to Indians, but we must be honest with ourselves and admit that it comes hard to most Englishmen. We may reflect with sorrow that creative imagination is not one of our national characteristics. When William Blake declared that he saw angles like stars in trees at Peckham Rye, many of his contemporaries thought of him, not as a great poet who was intent on realizing his poetry in the art of life, but as a great liar or lunatic. One suspects that the vision of angles like stars in trees would upset the nerves of the good, matter-of-fact people of Peckham Rye even today, perhaps almost as much as the sight of flying bombs.

### THE RAGA SYSTEM

Closely linked with this theory of *rasa*-appreciation is the system of *raga*, on which all Indian melody is built. The word *raga* is derived from the Sanskrit root *ranj*, the colouring of emotions. It suggests to Indian ears not only the melodic ground plan of a piece of music, but also gives a definite idea of its mood. *Raga* is, therefore, both a psychological and a technical device.

It would be less than a half-truth to say (and it often is said) that *raga* is the equivalent of the western scale system. More nearly correct to describe it as in some ways similar to the medieval modal system of European music. But even that likeness is far too limited to give a clear

picture of what *raga* really is. *Raga* might perhaps be best described as a mould for melody, having a definite emotional significance in *rasa*.

In South India there are about 500 types of individual *raga*, each a melody-mould of distinctive scale or modal pattern, as we might view the matter. The primary *ragas* are significantly called Lords of Melody, a striking indication of how Indians see them. They number no fewer than 72, and from these 400 odd secondary *ragas* are formed by combining in various ways five or more of the notes used in the primary *raga* under which they are grouped.

The classification of *raga* in the South differs from the North, where most musicians use what might be described as a family system of six principal *ragas*, each having a number of *raginis* or melody-mould wives, and *putras* or sons. Dr Narayana Menon and Dr. Bhupen Mukerjee will, I hope, be persuaded to enlarge upon their respective systems some time soon. Meanwhile we shall content ourselves by observing that the general principles that apply to Southern *raga* apply to the North also. Much of the difference is in name only.

### DELICATE BRUSH WORK

The instinct to embellish a melody is as universal as music itself, yet nowhere is it so pronounced as in the non-harmonic

music of India. Melodic ornaments are natural and necessary to all systems that employ no harmony. The delicate brush-work of the Indian *gamakas*, grace notes, limns the light and shade of a picture in sound, just as the consonance and dissonance of harmony do in western composition.

*Gamakas* are as integral a part of Indian melodic expression as the lips are to the face. Without them a melody cannot smile. *Gamakas* are never imposed upon a tune; they grow there as the spontaneous expression of emotion, an indication of spiritual emphasis. Fox Strangways rightly insists that: "There is never the least suggestion of anything having been 'added' to the note which is graced. The note with its grace makes one utterance".

Instrumental *gamakas* vary from a kind of wail, produced by deflecting the wire of a vina, for instance, to elaborate fingered phrases. Some of them seem to require an aural microscope for our unaccustomed western ears to grasp them in detail. Indian ears make hair's-breadth distinctions, sensitively attuned as they are to a highly evolved art of pure melody.

The seventeenth-century *Ragavibodha*, by the southern musicologist Somanatha, gives examples of fifty graces, but three times as many more baffle notation. Many *gamakas* are prodigiously subtle, as all who have heard good Indian singers and instrumentalists will be aware.





## गाय छाप ब्राह्मी आँवला तैल

आयुर्वेद सेवाश्रम लिमिटेड उदयपुर, वाराणसी, हैदराबाद

heros' : AS-134

## The Art of Seeing Painting

By

JAMES H. COUSINS \*

A Welsh poet, Lewis Morris, once wrote:

*Our hearing is not hearing,  
And our seeing is not sight.*

We may leave the statement about hearing to the musicians, and confine our attention to the function of the eye, which is the organ employed in "the art of seeing art" on its external side.

Whether eyesight will be necessary for seeing things some years hence is on the knees of the Gods of Science. With a plane that will get to its terminus more swiftly than sound, light will have to look to its lubrication, or it may become possible to start for a place and reach it yesterday or the day before. This would complicate history—but it is beyond our subject, alluring though it be.

### DEGREES OF SIGHT

There are different degrees of sight, and, a brief reference to them will help us to find the way to the art of seeing a picture with the maximum of pleasure and profit. A rummage through a dictionary (which I always recommend, particularly to myself, as a mentally stimulating beginning to any study) does not help us very much in this case. Such words as sight, seeing, looking, overlap one another. You cannot see without looking, though blind Milton saw immortal sights with the eye of the imagination. On the other hand, one can look, as the Welsh poet says, without seeing in the fullest sense of the term "see", a little Anglo-Saxon-German-Dutch word with twenty meanings.

A person who sees is not necessarily a "seer", for the person in past ages to whom the term was applied was mainly of the prophetic order, one who had the gift of penetrating below the surface of things and who from the sight of their trends could foretell their future. Today the term "seer" is generally applied to one who can see something usually unseen, a faculty called second-sight in Scotland, and by students of occultism called clairvoyance.

### THE IMAGE IN THE MIND

This may sound an odd technical kind of thing; but all of us, some time every day, exercise an equally technical kind of sight when someone puts a proposition before us, and after thinking it over we say, "I see". This seems to upset the saying that "you cannot see without looking." But what it says in effect is that there is a faculty which all possess, that operates through various organs in various ways and directions, and that translates its operations and distils its conclusions in a region of the human consciousness to which we may give the term imagination; not the imagining of things not present, but the condensing of an image in the mind which makes a connecting link between our innermost evaluation of anything present to the mind, and the ultimate reality of the thing so presented.

This interplay between the inner ultimate and the outer ultimate has been

\* Dr. Cousins whose Birth Century was celebrated in November 1978 organised the ART Galleries of Trivandrum and Mysore.

thrown into a line by the Irish poet Yeats in one of his short lyrics: "My dream of your image."

### THE BEAUTY BEHIND

At one end of his vision is "my" (himself) which looks outwards through an operation of the personal consciousness that he calls his "dream," that is, his creation in the imagination of something which corresponds to a similar "dream" in the "your" at the other end of his vision. In the poem Yeats addresses the Beauty that is behind and within all beautiful things. When that Beauty, which contains all shades and grades of itself, responds to the aspiration of the artist, in whatever medium he works, it approaches the artist by falling into an "image" of itself; not its whole self, but of the conditions and characteristics and qualities within it that correspond to those of the art of the aspiring artist. To the artist his expansion is through a "dream" that fluctuates and is tintured to some extent by his mental and emotional predilections. To ultimate Beauty its contraction is into an "image" that shows out some of the qualities of the 'Beauty of all beauty' that the other Irish poet AE sought for in his verse and his paintings.

These qualities are not fluctuate or transient. They are the everlasting stuff of tradition; the unity of subject, the community of parts, the proportion, harmony, appearance of a work of art; also its communication, what it has to say, which thinkers in art now ask for in even so apparently dumb a thing as a painting.

### ARTIST—OBSERVER COLLABORATION

These are all very deep considerations,

the subject matter of innumerable books from Plato and the Upanishads to the latest dabbler in aesthetics. Not many of those who stand in front of a painting may be aware of the collaboration between the artist and the universal principles of art or between the painting and the observer. Yet the knowledge of these principles increases one's power of appreciation and enriches one's pleasure; though ignorance of them does not take away certain simpler qualities that all of us in some measure possess and that give an almost universal pleasure in painting even if we do not know why.

Within these considerations are others that, in one way or another, affect our ability to see a painting. If, for example, we expect a painting to be something different from what the artist intended, we obstruct appreciation and reduce pleasure. If one of the paintings of Venice by Claude Monet, the French Impressionist, were put before us, and we grumbled at the dimness of the buildings, the bridges, the canals, that look as if they were smothered in fog; if we wanted to know the exact shape of doorways and the ornaments around windows; we should be looking for something outside the intention of the painter. He was not interested in details. He believed that surfaces were seen only because they threw back the light that the sun casts upon them. We may or may not accept the painter's theory as a true statement of natural fact; but *unless we are willing to keep in abeyance some of our own ideas as to what a painting should be, we shall get nothing from it.*

### SHARING OF PLEASURE

There may be paintings so far removed from our interests or knowledge that they

do not awaken any response in us. There may be others that arouse our antagonism by going against our own ideas of beauty or common sense. All the same there are certain pictorial characteristics that are shared in varying degrees by both the picture and the observer of it; and if we allow these to collaborate, we shall find a pleasure that is in the highest sense of the term habit-forming, that will want to renew and expand itself.

In the matter of colour, for example, there are those who have a special affinity with one or other of the colours of the spectrum of light. One may be specially drawn to a picture in which red is predominant. This is now known to be a stimulating colour, and will be pleasing to a healthy energetic person. But if one's energy runs to extremes, if one is irritable or feverish, then red may increase the irritation; and one can find relief by looking at a picture whose predominant colour is blue, which is known to have a soothing influence; just as pale yellow has a gently enlivening effect on body, mind and emotions.

### MENTAL FIXATIONS

This may appear to be something outside the simple art of seeing a picture; yet it is very much to the point, for our capacity to see is helped or hindered by a number of conditions. We bring along with sight our physical conditions, our mental fixations, our emotional prejudices, our worries, our aspirations, our hopes. Few have the capacity of dropping these in front of a painting and seeing it with the "naked eye." The most that most of us can do is to reduce personal interference as much as possible. We may not have the knowledge or taste to do this consciously; but we may be able to move towards true

picture-sight if we try the experiment of entertaining a gallery of paintings and following whatever attractions they hold out to us. In doing this we shall make discoveries about the paintings, about the painters, and about ourselves.

As to ourselves we shall discover our attractions and repulsions and not need the services of a psycho-analyst to solve our problems. As to the artist we shall find a means of judging whether he or she is a radiator of spiritual light or a disseminator of sensual poison. As for the picture, we shall discover it to be either a reflection or a prophecy of ourselves. It will tell us what we are by our preferences; and by drawing from us some desire for beauty it will hint at what we may become.

This latter influence of a painting was recognised centuries ago in the appendix to the Vishnu Purana, the *Vishnudharmotaram*, in which it is declared that an appropriate painting, if looked upon with intent, will help us to develop the virtue or special quality that it represents. If we are of a turbulent disposition, and should like to be thought of kindly by our friends, according to the ancient *sastra* we should hang a picture of quietness (say of a saint in meditation) where we can glance at it with a wish on our way to and from our daily avocations. The result will be a transformation of character.

### A VIEWER'S REACTIONS

A picture, and particularly a number of pictures, tells other things to the seeing eye. Twenty years ago, when I hung the first exhibition of Indian paintings in the then capital of humanity, Geneva, an old professional artist, a master of western technique, came to see them. He did not go from item to item according to the catalogue. He allowed the paintings to

call him. They were new to him, and different from anything to which he had been accustomed.

His first reaction was that of the artist. As he moved hither and thither and fixed his attention on a painting, I told him something of the artist, whether he was a recognised master, a candidate for fame, or a student. When he had finished his zig-zag survey, he summed up his impression in the statement that, whether the artists were masters or students, he saw in them all a common search for perfection.

Then he made another tour of the gallery and enquired about the subjects of a number of the paintings. Nature pictures were plain; but there were certain figures of personages outside his knowledge. I explained Nataraja, Hari-Hara, Krishna, Radha, and others. This took him deeper into the psychology of Indian painting. He summed up his second tour in the statement that he saw in all the paintings, whether natural or super-natural, a spirit of devotion.

These discoveries took him into the secret of Indian painting of the time, 20 years ago. But, being apparently a man of knowledge and thought, he was aware that no art which showed perfection of technique and devotion of spirit could be a purely spontaneous activity, but had behind it the weight of tradition, and that its own qualities were a reflection of that tradition. His parting summary of his impressions was: "I see behind all these paintings a great civilisation."

Such a discovery of quality, mood and background is the fine art of seeing pictures. Years have to go to its acquisition; but it is worth while starting towards it by looking at a painting, or paintings, in

one or other of the ways that I have indicated—Published in 'YOUNG CITIZEN', 1949, KALAKSHETRA. 1949.



... What if all animated nature Be but organic harps diversely formed,

That trembled into thought as over them sweep,

Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the soul of each and God of all.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

\* \* \*

Pure art is the expression of one's own experience. The artist can create living characters and situations only out of the world in which he has lived and felt. That beauty alone is eternal which transcends the temporary elements of contemporary life and the desire to carry on propaganda. It must express the immortal aspirations of the human heart.

K. M. MUNSHI.

\* \* \*

Beauty is that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without any other allurements but its own ultimate value. When in some pure moments of ecstasy we realise this in the world around us, we see the world, not as merely existing, but as decorated in its forms, sounds, colours and lines; we feel in our hearts that there is One who through all things proclaims: "I have joy in my creation."

RABINDRANATH TAGORE,

## H. V. Ram Gopal—Versatile Artist

By

SOWMIYA MADHAN GOPAL

A versatile painter and a sensitive sculptor, H. V. Ram Gopal (who passed away recently) was endowed with a poetic temperament and viewed things from that angle. As an artist, he was never adventurous; he was a careful builder of composition, a conscientious observer of the fundamental rules, a seeker after the explainable brush stroke. He was a master of many media (water colour, oils, pastels and sculpture.) and excelled in portraiture, which etched the character of the sitter and landscapes of lyrical charm and beauty.

### EARLY LIFE

Ram Gopal was born in East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh, 56 years ago in a middle class family. Evincing a flair for drawing, early in his life, he joined the Madras School of Arts and Crafts, after completing his school education. The great sculptor and painter, Dr. D. P. Roy Choudhury, The Principal, spotting his talent, admitted him in the final year of the Five-Year Diploma Course. After achieving some proficiency in painting both in water colour and oils, Ram Gopal took up sculpture and received intensive training under the master.

For five years the master spared no pains and time to teach his favourite pupil. A rapid sketch of Choudhury done by Ram Gopal in three minutes, earned the esteem of the master who exclaimed spontaneously: "I had an impression that I was a quick and competent draughtsman; you have excelled me and I am proud of you. May God bless you".

### DEDICATED TEACHER

The master who was profoundly impressed by his pupil's achievements gave him a job in the School as Instructor in painting in 1948. A sincere and dedicated teacher, Ram Gopal treated his pupils with kindness and affection and taught them with devotion. Soon, he was promoted as Chief Instructor of the Painting Section, and became Vice-Principal in 1957. For a few years he served in this capacity under K. C. S. Panikar, who was then the Principal. Later, he was transferred to Kumbakonam, as Principal of the Government Arts School, where he served for some years. After a few years, he assumed the position of Vice-Principal of the College of Arts and Crafts, Madras, under Dhanapal, who became the Principal. He was voluntarily retired during the Emergency in 1975, though he had a few more years of service. Since then, he lived as a free lance painter and sculptor, executing some bronze busts and statues.

### GREAT PORTRAIT PAINTER

Ram Gopal, had participated in almost all All India Exhibitions organised by the State and Lalit Kala Akademies. He had held a number of one-man shows in Hyderabad, New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta Dehra Dun and Madurai. Recently, he held an exhibition of his paintings, sculptures and bronze busts at the Max Muller Bhavan. Later, at the annual Music Academy Conference in Madras, his exclusive portraits and sketches of musicians in oils and pen and ink, were praised by critics and connoisseurs alike.

For nearly two years he taught me how to sketch, mix oil colours and to paint on canvas. A master of portraiture, landscapes and still lifes, he spared no pains to initiate me into these subtle aspects of painting. Our out-door forays were instructive and fruitful and I did many landscapes including the "Boat Club", which I donated to the Madras Governor's Flood Relief Fund. He used to slowly guide rather than correct the painting. One such painting "Waves" done after a visit to the beach, flowered as a fine sea-scape. His selfless devotion to his work and sincerity in teaching his students earned the esteem and goodwill of many.

### MASTERPIECES

Of his great masterpieces in oils are the portraits of musicians done from life, which bring out the emotion and character of the sitter. They include Mysore Vasu-

devachar, Namakal Narasimha Iyengar, Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, Musiri Subramanya Aiyer, Maharajapuram Viswantha Aiyar and Papa Venkatramiah. His bronze busts were truly life-like and in this class were Vinobha Bhave, Nehru, Kumaraswami Raja, Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar and Visvesvarayya of Mysore. Of his water colours are the portrait of K. Srinivasan, former Editor of "THE HINDU", and paintings and character studies published in the "SWATANTRA". Shy, sensitive and reticent, he never sought the lime-light and remained in the background. But, he never compromised his views on men, matters and painting. These were expressed vigorously and tersely without fear or favour. A warm and kindly soul, his last few years were passed in illness, anguish and despondency, until his final end in a city hospital.



Knowing an art without any personal experience of its practical problems is a very doubtful form of culture

—Martin Cooper

The cruelest (musical) criticisms I have ever had were made by men who could not play a single note on any musical instrument, even the penny whistle.

—A Pianist

Art for Art's sake is heartless and soon grows artless

—Judge Martin Manton (USA)

He who lives on Hope dies fasting

—Proverb

No society can do without intolerance, indignation and disgust—They are the forces behind the law.

—Sir Patrick Devlin



## Some Aspects of Music Education

By

SRI SANDHYAVANDANAM SREENIVASA RAO

All institutions imparting training in classical Karnatik Music must aim at giving sound music education to selected students. Education in music cannot be regarded as really sound if the holder of a certificate or degree or diploma does not have the following minimum equipment; capacity to sing Alankaras in five degrees of speed; a clear and easy control over two and a half octaves; sing a varnam in three or at least two degrees of speed without flaws. The holder of the degree should be able to sing Ragas like Sankarabharanam and Kambhoji for ten minutes and "prasiddha" ragas like Bilahari and Saveri for five minutes, keeping the Raga form pure and full of traditional colour. He must have at least a working knowledge of Sankrit, Telugu and Tamil.

He should be able to read a song given in notation, sing neraval and swaram to a chosen and given theme with spontaneous kalpana. If he could sing a brief Raga Alapana, Tanam and Pallavi where the set-up is easy and affords ample scope for neraval and "vistaram" and if the candidate can render various forms like Varnam, Kriti, Padam, Javali, Thillana and Slokam in a dignified manner, the training could be regarded as sound. If after achieving this musicianship and sangeetha Vyutpathi, the scholar has a sound knowledge of musicology, the training can be adjudged as ideal and quite sound.

### BHASHA GNANAM

It is clear that, as yet, very few institutions teach Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil though any foreigner coming to India to learn music starts learning Sanskrit and Tamil. The lack of a minimum

Bhashagnanam is a big flaw. Training of voice or instrument every day for a couple of hours under guidance to get "Sruthi Suddham" and "Laya Suddham" has to be arranged. This is not being done even upto this day. Guided listening of performances, demonstrations and recordings are very necessary. A few students should be picked up for a special training in the Krithis of Sri Thyagaraja, Dikshitar, Syamasastri and in Padams. There should be open institutions where the great classics of the Trinity are readily taught in the strict traditional "Padhantharam".

Goshtiganam where eminent musicians jointly expound a Raga, a Krithi and a Neraval would be an ideal seminar for a music institution. Theory should be taught after it is rewritten after the manner of the ancient texts and not in the usual anglicised approach.

At least in premier institutions, Hindustani music, folk music and elements of western music must be taught so that some of the students with a special bent may turn out to be good composers—classical, light and film-type. The Government must utilise the Radio, the Television and the Gramophone to spread right taste and knowledge of classical music.

When even an average student learns to identify the traditional ragas and enjoys the classical expositions, a surer place for classical music is assured. This requires a big effort. It is to be hoped that at least in the fourth decade after the dawn of Swaraj, all the schools will teach traditional music and give opportunity to the talented in the villages and moffusil centres to blossom into good singers and able performers.







|| ஸதிதா ஸா / ரீ ; | க் ம் கர் ஸ்ர,நி க்ரீ, நிகாநி | ஸ்ர ஸ்நி | தபதா ||  
 க. வி ஜ இ . . . தி\* ஸன் . . . னு . . . தி பா- . . . .. த்ர ||  
 || தரி ஸ்ர, நி ஸ்நி தா தநிபா பா | மப தாஸ்ஸா/ தப|தம | மக/ மரி | கரிஸா ||  
 க . . ம . . னீ . . . . . ய கா\* த்ர சின் . . . மா . . . . . த்ர . . . . . ||

**மத்யம காலை**

|| ஸநி நித கரிக ஸா பமகா | மபதா பத மகபத | தஸ் பா | தஸா ||  
 பு\* வன\*பரண பூ\* த க\* ண ப தே \*ப வ ஹ ர ந த விதி\*ஸ்ரீ ||  
 || க்/ ம் நி/ க் ஸ்ர ஸ்நி ஸ்நி தா நிப | தநி| பா மப வி ல | /தப பாக்கரி க்ம் க்ரிஸ் | தாஸ்நிஸ்ர,நி ||  
 சிவ கு\* ரு கு\* ஹ-ஜ-ன க ப சூ ப தே ந வ மணி மல னித சி..த் ஸ..\*பா.. ப தே.. (காசி) ||

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